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Gorsuch, Wm. J.

True Reform

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TRUE REFORM

ADDRESS

DELIVERED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

LINCOLN COUNCIL NO. 16

NATIONAL PROVIDENT UNION

BY

GOV. WM. J. GORSUCH

OF CONNECTICUT

BRIDGEPORT
CONN. DEPT. N. P. U. 7 HICKS BUILDING
1891

TO THE READER.

If you are a citizen of the N. P. U., a Trade Unionist, a Knight of Labor, or a member of any other association whose principles are based upon an abiding faith in the higher destiny of man, get your society to distribute at least one hundred copies of this pamphlet. That is, if you find herein the truth I have endeavored, to the best of my ability, to shadow forth; for I do not presume, nor desire, to merely impose a task upon your kindly feeling toward

THE AUTHOR.

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TRUE REFORM.

In late years we have had a great rush of radical thought on social, political and industrial questions.

Some timid folk view this phenomena with alarm, fearing it portends danger to our republic; while others welcome with joy any innovation in politics, religion or economics, holding that previous concepts have become musty, and that the world needs a new revelation.

The former cling with death-grip to whatever has been, or is, and resist, with desperate energy, any proposed modification or change; while the latter zealously urge the rejection of all societary ideals born of the soul-anguish of generations dead and gone, and the acceptance of the strangest and wildest vagaries, merely because they are asserted to be for the benefit of the people.

To my mind both of these extreme positions are unwise.

Because a thought is old, it is not necessarily true; nor does the fact of an opinion being new prove it to be the offspring of righteousness. Through this confusing labyrinth of error, old and new, there must run

a line of truth ; and I believe that America holds in her hand the clue, which, if fearlessly followed, will lead mankind out of the dark caves of despotism, greed and hatred, into the clear light of liberty, equality and love.

Roll back the curtain of the years, and, in the infancy of the race, we find first expressed in human action the fundamental principle of right by which we strive to guide our lives to-day.

In that time, man was but little more than animal. Rude, savage, barbarian, we see him struggling onward, conscious alone of the cold that chills, the fire that warms, the hunger that gripes. Through the dank maze of the primeval forest he wanders, the prey of beasts scarce more savage than himself. Hairy, tailed, with protruding jaw, long forearm, and hand-like feet, there is little to distinguish him from the ape, except that he walks erect, and in his eye there shines a sad, pathetic, questioning light that shows the dawning consciousness of hopes and powers not known to other creatures of the woodland and the dell. The fauns and satyrs of mythologic lore were not inapt types of early man.

Once upon a time, in those ancient days, one of these first men is gathering fruit and nuts and roots to carry to his loved ones that their hunger may be appeased, when a stronger and more brutal man leaps upon him, and, wresting from him his treasure, drives him wounded and howling from the glen.

The weaker one hastens to his friends and relatives, and tells them how the tyrant of the forest, who will not gather for himself, has again deprived him of his food, and bruised and torn his body. To their listening ears the story is not new. For a long while this idle, savage giant, secure in his superior strength, has played the despot, and robbed, plundered and abused his weaker fellows at will.

But now the times are ripe. Slowly in their dull minds glows the thought; "Why should this be? True, he is stronger than any one of us, but we are numerous. Let us unite our strength, and we are stronger than he!"

In their eyes burns a new flame, and in their souls quivers a new life, as, for the for the first time, is heard the voice of progress chanting: "He who oppresses his fellows shall die, to make way for liberty for all!"

And unitedly they go forth, and fall upon the ravager, and rend him limb from limb.

Thus society is born—association of units for mutual advancement and improvement—and thus the banner under which we march to day is first unfurled to the breeze. On it, between the stars and the stripes, written by the hands of those pre-historic freemen, we can yet read, "PROTECTION FOR WEAKNESS: RESISTANCE TO WRONG!"

As one of later date has said:

"Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

The beginning of social development was the absorbtion of all rights by the strongest, shrewdest or most wise, and the leaving to the people only the performance of duties. The head-man assumed this position because he was the most able, and therefore he was called König—he who *can*—the King.

The next step toward societary adjustment is for the people to reclaim from their rulers—*König*—these rights, and adding them to the duties, to affirm and exercise both rights and duties themselves. This, though, is possible only when the people become conversant with the rights, and through interior unfoldment, are able to wield them.

True sovereignty, kinghood, nobility, cannot be conferred by parchment-writ, or accident of birth. No mere word of mouth can bestow this dignity. It can only be attained by growing to the altitude of the kingly estate. It is a condition which is not intended to be confined to a select few, but is to be enjoyed by all; and modern social progress, is, in reality, but the gradual upgrowing of the people, of the all, to this plane of aristocracy—*fitting strength, best to rule.*

A proclamation of freedom issued to slaves, cannot emancipate them. It can only change the manner or form of their thraldom. For when men are enslaved, it is solely because they do not understand, because they *Ken-not*. When they become wise, they ever

cease to be slaves; they then issue their own emancipation proclamation.

If an ideal system was imposed upon men, contrary to their desire, they would be enslaved equally as much as if under Czarism. Progress must be, not an imposition, but an evolution.

For after all, the spirit of an age is the spirit that permeates the mass of the people of that age. From this source springs the divinity that agitates the stagnant pool of custom.

No man should flatter himself that he is a leader of men. In so far as his work succeeds it proves that he is in accord with the active aspirations of mankind; that he is their duly accredited agent, but not their master.

Hero-worship is a legacy from the wonder-loving past. A great man is to be honored, but not adored, or blindly followed, for he is, at best, but the mouthpiece of the general thought; he crystallizes in word and deed that which they inchoately feel, but cannot utter. He cannot inaugurate reform or abolish abuses until the people have imbibed wisdom.

Thus, in the last analysis, ignorance is the only tyrant who can hold enchained the soul or the body of man.

True reform consists in the extension of rights and duties among the people. In the perfect social integration, all the people will enjoy and exercise, in com-

plete equality, all rights and duties. But for persons to exercise these rights and duties they must be fit; they must comprehend both the duties and the rights.

No governments, laws, customs or beliefs, have stood in the way of mankind, long ere this, evolving the perfect society. The only obstacle has ever been man's own unfitness; and the grave error some of our most devoted reformers make is in not fully estimating this fact.

Merely demanding that more rights and privileges be granted is not only wasteful of valuable time and energy, but may retard healthy social development, for the asking for and the granting of such rights, carries with it the admission or inference that liberty and equality are boons to be vouchsafed by superiors to inferiors.

The truth is that until the people uplift and elevate themselves, the shouting of "Liberty and Equality" to the four winds of heaven is a delusion and a snare. Liberty and equality are as old as the first atomic particle called into action by divine impulse—are uncreated, are eternal, are God. They are not to be granted; cannot be given; they are to be grown up to, and can be enjoyed only by those who thus gain them.

When the people know what the people need, they rise to being; they do not get being conferred on them. The former is freedom; the latter would be slavery.

We find faint gleams of this God's truth flashing through the centuries, till lost in the dense mist of a forgotten past, but never till our fathers spoke did the world sense the reality of that immortal assertion: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Equality is not an optional affair; is not something that may be withheld at the will of others, but is the attribute of each man, through the fact of his having been born. It is a bountiful repast, ever spread, waiting for whoever will to enter in and partake of the feast.

Distorted and hackneyed as its phrases have been made by partisan politicians, our Declaration of Independence is simply an affirmation of man's inherent and inalienable right to grow; and our National Constitution is a plain statement of the ways and means of this growth, and a guarantee of its perpetuation to generations yet unborn.

Our Constitution shows how the people may attain to the full exercise of their inherent rights, and at the same time avoid the danger of the Statehood being dominated by a soulless autocracy, or submerged and lost in the irresponsible despotism of a senseless mob. It is the palladium of our liberties. Deep-grounded in the hearts of the American people, it stands impregna-

ble between the two extremes of a dictatorship, or a besotted rabble, and points with unerring skill the true road to freedom.

This is clearly shown in Articles I, IX and X, of amendments.

ART. I. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

ART. IX. The enumeration, in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

ART. X. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people.

It has been said that our Constitution is a compromise. This is true; but is that a reproach? What is the meaning of a compromise? Some seem to think it means a sacrifice of the truth; yet the reverse may be the case.

Webster defines a compromise as "a reciprocal abatement of extreme demands, resulting in an agreement;" and Edmund Burke says: "All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter."

In every department of nature's kingdom it is through compromise that all healthy, organic growths are evolved; and without such "reciprocal abatement of

extreme demands" there would be either cessation of activity, or abnormal and imperfect development.

The seed—a bean, for instance—planted in the soil to fertilize, and propagate its kind, affords an excellent illustration of this universal law of life. In the body of the bean reposes the bean-life or spirit, called the "germ," surrounded by compound substances, such as starch, sugar, &c. These substances are built up of the elements oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and carbon. When the heat and moisture of the sun and earth come into relation with the compounds, sugar and starch, these substances begin to disintegrate—decay, as we call it—and fall back into their primal, elemental state of oxygen, hydrogen nitrogen and carbon, and, at the same time, set free the chemical force that held them combined. This process continues until the germ itself is reached. It, being a simple life-element, resists chemical action and says: "Let me be; let me alone!"

So a conflict ensues; a heated debate takes place; chemical force crying: "Decompose! Become inorganic! Die!" and germ-life shouting, "I will not! I am satisfied! I will remain as I am!"

This goes on until both sides are nearly exhausted, and finally the germ says: "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I won't die, but I'll spring upward into a higher organic form as a plant, and shower forth a whole crop of beans, if you will agree to help. Will that satisfy you?"

And chemical force answers: "Yes; I accept the compromise. Anything rather than lie there doing nothing, sleeping the time away, so get up and grow!"

And thus we have the vigorous plant, beautiful with flower, and later bending low beneath its weight of life-sustaining fruit, as the outcome of a compromise. Without this mutual concession, we would have had either the unfertile, unchanging germ, or corruption and death.

So of our Constitution. Those who call it "a mere compromise," speak wiser than they know; they praise when they would condemn; for through compromise lies safety and progress.

Few men are so wise as to know all the truth. Even our brightest intellects cannot hope to be infallible. The separating of the true from the false in what each one holds, the merging of these various portions of truth into one composite yet harmonious whole, gives full-rounded expression to the highest thought of an age, and thus forms the sure foundation of a governmental frame-work best fitted to the needs of the people of that age. When the needs of the people expand, with the growth of their wisdom, the frame-work of the State must keep pace with this expansion, or give way to one better fitted to the people's needs.

This course of evolution is Herbert Spencer's median line of progress. Equi-distant from wild erraticism, hungry for anything, so be it a change, and from barren

conservatism, wedded to a petrified and outgrown past, it molds the plastic good of the new 'round and through the time-tested structure of the old, and thus gives us an organic being, instinct with the glow and glory of youth, yet possessing the tried strength of manhood, conjoined to the ripe experience of age.

This, friends, is our republic; an organism instinct with the glow and glory of youth, yet erect in the strength of manhood, and crowned with the experience of age. Our republic, in which to realize a government of, by, and for the people, not through rashly experimenting with peculiar and far-fetched theories, but through our learning how to exercise our rights in harmony with its constitutionally free institutions.

What are our free institutions? Freedom of Worship, Free Press, Free Speech, Free Judiciary, free and untrammelled use of the franchise in the utterance of our will; and a retention by ourselves, as the people, of all rights not specifically granted to the United States, or to the States respectively.

"But," it is objected, "these free institutions are more in name than in reality. It sounds well to announce them, but practically they exist not for the toiling mass, but only for a special class."

There is a seeming truth in this criticism, and yet only seeming.

Our rights are written in the basic law of the land, engraven upon the granite rock of human equality, and

uttered in the assertion of unital sovereignty. The law has done its part, the republic has done its duty, and if we still slumber in indolence, or grovel in abasement, it is not the fault of our institutions; our own slavish inertia alone must justly bear the blame.

The tools lie ready for the hand, waiting to be grasped, and shall we condemn the tools that the timber is not hewn, if we recline at ease, weaving bright fancies of a millennium that ought to be?

You will all agree that he would be a foolish farmer who would swear because the grain wasn't harvested, if he spent the day fishing for whales with a bent pin.

If there is evil in our land, and God knows there is—evil of destitution, drunkenness, greed and crime, in a word, ignorance—it is to be cured, not by growling or dreaming, but by earnest labor, using with wisdom and skill the legally constituted means which the genius of our institutions provides.

For there are no heaven-lent wings by which Olympus can be scaled. Slow and toilsome is humanity's evolution from the low, the narrow, the crude, up to the high, the broad, the refined; and the watchword of the day is, and must ever be: Education! Education!

"Ye shall know the truth," we are told, "and the truth shall make you free."

True. But to know, one must learn, and to learn, one must strive. Heaven, here on earth, or beyond the

mystic river of death, is to be gained alone by those who, through striving, deserve.

To our charter right of "the people peaceably to assemble and petition for a redress of grievances," the objection is sometimes made that such a right is a mere sarcasm, an empty pretence, by which the enslaved are deluded into believing they are free.

This objection is not valid. To assemble means to discuss; to discuss means to know and agree; and when the people know and agree, and thus crystallize public opinion, our representatives ever hasten to obey, and enact our will. It is only when the people do not agree, and heedlessly leave matters in the hands of the politicians, that corruption and abuses creep in.

You remember the old story of the birds and the husbandman. When the farmer said, "We'll have our neighbors over, and cut the wheat to-morrow," the mother-bird said to the little ones, "Don't worry, children; we won't move to-day." But when the farmer said, "We will get up bright and early in the morning, and cut the wheat ourselves," the old bird cried, "Hurry up, children; we must get out of this at once!"

Politicians—our statesmen—and editors are willing to pose as leaders and moulders of public opinion, but this claim on their part is, in reality, an almost unfounded assumption. They seldom strive to lead the people, and are usually very careful to keep just a little behind

the thought of the times. They feel the public pulse, and govern themselves accordingly.

And they are wise in their day and generation; for the lesson of the ages is, that whoever dares to preach a truth purer and higher than the masses are able to accept, must drain the hemlock-cup, or sweat drops of blood upon a Calvary cross.

So the fact remains that the initiative of reform is in the hands of the people themselves. Political parties amount to but little, and whether our legislators be republican or democratic, is of small moment, except to those who draw the salaries. Whatever be the partisan complexion of those who sit in our deliberative, our law-making bodies, let a majority of the people once say, outside of party lines, "This is what we want done!" lo! it is accomplished.

But the people must speak in no uncertain accent, and they cannot so speak unless they first think. Our duty is to help them to think by doing what we can to educate ourselves and others in the true principles of American free-citizenship.

To exercise the rights of a citizen requires something more than to cast a ballot as some political clique directs.

We must possess a full knowledge of our duties to ourselves, our families and our country, and the manly courage to act in accordance with that knowledge, if we would be worthy of enjoying the blessings of liberty

and equality that our institutions are intended to confer and defend.

And herein is work for the National Provident Union to do—work that, I believe, few organizations in the United States are so well-fitted to perform. The work of training the minds and souls of men to make them true citizens of what the Almighty Father said shall be a republic of independent and enlightened sovereigns.

The N. P. U. has not yet taken the position it is entitled to occupy among the educational agencies of our age, but I believe if we put forth the proper effort now, we can make the Order not only the largest and best fraternal insurance association in the land, but also one of the most effective means for instructing and strengthening the people in the principles of self-government.

The N. P. U., and our republican government, are, as yet, in their infancy, but they are both formed on the same lines of evolutionary growth, and we, as citizens of the union, and as citizens of the republic, in striving to advance and strengthen the one, are perforce laboring for the other. Thus, all honest effort for either, makes us better and truer men and women, and worthier children of patriotic sires.

What I have said of opportunities for educational work in the N. P. U. will apply with equal force to some other existing associations. I refer especially to the Trade Unions, and the Knights of Labor. There

we find a magnificent field for the putting forth of such effort, if it be honestly and intelligently exerted.

Through these bodies the great mass of the people can be reached; and it is well to remember a fact which some of us seem prone to forget, namely, the real people of America are the workers, the producers, and not the ladies and gentlemen of elegant leisure.

Some forms of government, such as the Empire, the Monarchy, the Autocracy, or the Oligarchy, are fixed and limited in their sphere of action, and to subject them to change would destroy them; but a pure democracy, such as ours, is susceptible of extension and development without in the least endangering the national life.

The former systems must in time petrify into a hard and unyielding shell of precedent and privilege, and the only power that can relieve the people is forcible and armed revolution. But the latter system, deriving its existence perennially from the inner and progressive life of the people, cannot harden, and must remain plastic and responsive to the newest and best thought of the age; and thus, keeping pace with the people's growth, it must ever be the true expression of the people's will. Corrupt and venal when the people are vile, it becomes virtuous and just when the people's ideals are noble and pure. Revolution under the latter system would be simply suicide. It would be our cutting our own throats.

Thus again we are forced to assert, "There is but one panacea for all ills, physical or spiritual, to which the human body, or the body politic, is heir, namely: Education and Growth."

The true reformer has learned that this education must begin with one's self. It is useless to preach truth, if we ourselves are false. Mere words of mouth cannot deceive the forces that make for progress. The genuine faith of a man is ever manifest in his influence, whether for good or evil. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

A man is harshly condemning the present system and bitterly bemoaning his poverty-stricken lot.

I ask him, "How many years have you drank rum?"

He replies, "Fifteen years."

I say, "Drink none for five years, and I'll guarantee you will have less cause to complain."

"But," he replies, "if I had saved all I've spent for drink I would be no better off. If the whole people reduced economy to a fine art, it would benefit nobody, for the ones to-day producing the luxuries would be thrown out of employment, and their competing for work would cut wages to the point of a bare living."

This is a half truth, and therefore a whole error.

If this man becomes a total abstainer he will not only save what he now spends for drink, but he will lose less

time recovering from sprees, he will develop greater skill through being more with tools and books, and less in saloons, and so he will earn more wages. Greater than all, he will have a clear head and steady nerves to seize and utilize chances to which to-day he is blind, and thus he will begin to grow out of his present whining incapacity into the self-reliance and self-help of a manly man.

If the great army of toilers will cease the use of strong drink, I venture to assert that there will be no reduction of wages due to increased competition among the workers, but that their sober minds, and therefore intelligent ballots, will soon legislatively solve the vexed problem of Production *versus* Monopoly, and raise wages to the full earning power of labor.

Some earnest folks believe there can be a short-cut to glory, and run wild after every new reform fad that ill-balanced minds conceive. They are mostly honest, but they are mistaken. The law of God, which is the law of growth, is from the inner, outward. It is first, soul-awakening, and then utterance in individual and social life. In time we advance beyond the illusions of youth. In time, and through suffering, we are forced to know that the universe is greater than we; that here stand the eternal verities, and it is for us to conform therewith or die.

Guizot, the eminent French historian, holds that a true civilization is one which tends to the improvement

of both the individual and the state; while a false civilization develops either one at the expense of the other.

According to that standard, our republic, in which the citizen and the state are in intimate and re-active touch, in which the status of the one determines the morality of the other, affords the most favorable opportunity the world has ever known for the outworking of a true civilization. Such words of laudation for the wondrous achievements of our fair republic of the west are not merely sickly sentiment, but convey a plain statement of a simple fact.

In other times and nations, he who was born a peasant could never become a noble. The social lines of ruled and rulers were sharply and insurmountably drawn at birth. Here, in this age, we see the tailor, or rail splitter, sitting in the highest seat in the land, and the son of toil and privation becoming the king of finance.

Mark you, I do not say that the creation of a few millionaires, attended by an army of paupers and tramps, is not a deplorable evil, temporary though it be, but it fades into utter insignificance in view of the tremendous fact that to-day millionaires can and do arise even from the ranks of those same paupers and tramps.

What do I find so significant in that fact? This:

When nature gives birth to a new species, it does not spring into existence with numerous representatives, but through radiation and change, a single individual is first born, a type of the species which is to follow. Soon

the individuals increase in number, and the species grows and spreads until, in time, it overcomes and supersedes the old; and the new becomes the regular order of things.

So I see, in this practical shattering of class privilege and prejudice, this breaking down of the barriers of caste, the birth and spread of a new species, of which the plutocrats of to-day are the mere forerunners. In the fullness of time there will not be, as now, a few oppressive and arrogant—because ignorant—wealth-grubbers, but when the new regime has worked out its spirit of equality of rights, there will have been a complete assimilation of prince, privilege, plutocrat and pauper, and the evolvement of a nation in which each citizen will be richer, in material and spiritual wealth, than any nabob of to-day.

This will be the divine fruition of the titanic strivings of our sires. Our function is not to enjoy in complacent ease the present result of their labors, but to carry onward the ark of the covenant of God with man.

We have here established the kingdom of man, the sovereignty of the people, the republic of humanity; and, as our fathers dethroned monarchy, and our brothers abolished chattel-slavery, it is for us to break the final bonds of shortsighted selfishness that still shackle the bodies and souls of men.

Thus realizing in America the reign of justice, of which prophets have spoken and poets have sung, the

will of God *will* be done on earth as in heaven; and the influence of our example, permeating the farthest stretches of the world, will finally unite in one brotherhood, all races, all the children of men.

And far beyond the ebbing tide of time there reaches still another vista of infinite possibility for the soul of man, toward which Hope lifts her radiant face, as she whispers to the listening ear of Faith:

"Doubt not. Whoever will, shall know both life and love eternal."

To sum up: all rights of man are included in the one right to develop, to improve, to become better; in a word, TO GROW. This excludes and nullifies the privilege of debasing, of degrading, of bestializing one's self.

True reform is that which will make easier of attainment and more secure, the means of exercising said right to grow.

This is fully and completely done by our institutions of Free Worship, Free Speech, Free Press, Free Judiciary and Free Ballot; and their constitutional guarantee.

Therefore, we conclude: true reform is always in harmony with American institutions, and always begins with, and works out from, the individual.

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[*Extract from South Norwalk Sentinel, October 14, 1891.*]

THEIR DELIBERATIONS CLOSED.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE PRINCIPAL ADDRESS OF THE FEDERATION OF LABOR CONVENTION.

The Connecticut Branch Federation of Labor, which has been in session in Germania Hall, closed yesterday afternoon. The forty-odd delegates present represented over 20,000 laboring people in this State. The convention was a very harmonious one. The principal address of the convention was given by William J. Gorsuch, of the Central Labor Union, Bridgeport, a synopsis of which is given below:

To all organizations of men there are two gospels presented, one of which must be accepted as an ideal, or rule of action. Since man was first formed he has had to thus choose. These gospels typify the conceptions of God and Satan, good and evil, as we find them floating through the centuries that are gone.

To these ideals I would call your most earnest attention. I have noticed in some of the thoughts expressed to-day a slight leaning toward what I consider the evil side, and would warn you that if this be your rule of action, the result to the organization and to the cause of labor must be disastrous.

These two gospels are the one of Hatred and Force, the other of Love and Growth.

Hatred and Force flow back upon and destroy those who follow their banner, while Love and Growth lead mankind out of darkness and despotism into the pleasant valleys of peace and joy.

All men are built about alike, are formed on the same plan. If you appeal to them in the name of hate they will meet force with force. If you appeal to them in the name of love and brotherhood the well-springs of humanity will break down the selfish barriers of greed and freely give forth blessings that cannot be gained by the strong hand of might.

Let us follow the teachings of the Nazarene who said: "Do unto others as ye would have others do unto you," and I dare prophesy that through organization humanity will be educated into evolving a perfect social organism in which there will be no longer masters and slaves, but only free men. This will be the realization of America's dream of equality. But remember it cannot be imposed by force, but must be an evolution based on fraternity, under the guidance of love.

Mutual concession means progress, while the highest ideal of justice carried into effect through compelling people to accept it contrary to their wish, would enslave and not emancipate them.

With education as the means, and growth as the end, I can see great good for the Federation to do, and I believe you will be wise enough to effectively forward that work.

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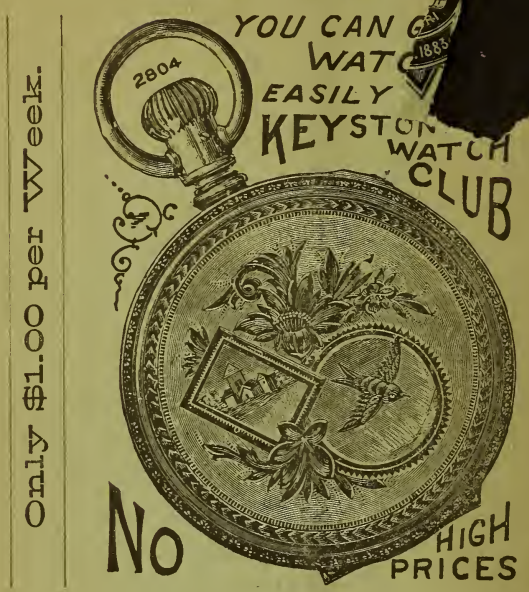

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